

# Breakfast at six to unite the blacks

At six o'clock each weekday morning a group of Aboriginal women meet at a centre in an inner City suburb to serve breakfast to between 30 and 40 Aboriginal children.

The centre is a remodelled factory in a narrow street in Chippendale. It is called Murawina, an Arunta word meaning black woman.

The exterior of the building is painted black.

Mrs Norma Williams, spokeswoman for the group, said:

"At Murawina we are striving for unity of black women. We are trying to prevent malnutrition among the Aboriginal children and to educate the Aboriginal family."

The children are taken to Murawina where the women give them a substantial breakfast — usually cornflakes, a hot dish and a mug of milk.

"Very often there are a large number of children in a family and the mother just cannot cope with feeding them all, either because of lack of money, or lack of time because she has to go to work, or both," said Mrs Williams.

The centre stays open until about 5 pm each weekday.

Mrs Williams says that the vital thing about a project such as Murawina is that the Aboriginal people themselves are involved. They realise that they have something — Murawina — and that it is up to them to keep it going.

Murawina began just over a year ago. The people who thought up the idea and who helped build Murawina want to remain anonymous.

In February last year, two Aboriginal youths went to the Wayside Chapel to ask for some help with a breakfast program they wanted to start in these inner city suburbs. They wanted to see that Aboriginal children went to school with a full stomach and so could concentrate on their work better.

With some money from a Federal Government grant, the Wayside Chapel agreed to help.

Mrs Williams, who has two children, was involved in the founding group. The group gave the children their breakfast in a Newtown park until the cold winter months forced them to stop.

Then last August, a Sydney businessman gave them a disused two-storey



Talking can be as absorbing as eating for Aboriginal children having breakfast at Murawina — until a grown-up comes along . . .

factory building in Shepherd Street, Chippendale.

He remodelled it. Cupboards, a stove, a refrigerator and a water service were installed, cutlery and crockery were provided and he built small tables and chairs for the children.

Murawina has now been functioning in its present form for four weeks.

The Aboriginal Medical Service in Redfern lends Murawina a van each morning to collect the children for breakfast and then return them to their homes in time for school.

The Wayside Chapel had been very good in arranging for gifts of old furniture, food and some equipment, but each day it was becoming obvious that many more things were needed, Mrs Williams said.

"We have so many plans: for a pre-school class to be set up during the day and for the upstairs section to be used as a sewing centre for the women and also a recreation lounge," she said.

The women want to educate their children to understand that there is nothing wrong with being black in a white society. They hope, too, they can teach the children their heritage, tribal customs, culture and about their language.

The women hope to attain the services of an Aboriginal pre-school teacher, Wundjuk Murika, who has been working with the Yirrkala tribe in the Gove Peninsula for two years.

Only Aboriginal women can join Murawina. It costs 20c. Husbands can help only with some of the heavy work and handyman jobs.

The mothers are applying to the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Bryant, for a \$70,000 grant towards a salary for the mothers whose work at Murawina is voluntary. Some of the money would help the women to modernise and extend the



Mrs Norma Williams checks on progress with the main breakfast dish



But there are those who have their priorities right.

